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Skill levels for resume

We all know that having the right skills is the key to landing a job. But when it comes to quantifying our skills and defining exactly what we can offer a potential employer, many of us struggle to find the right words.You don't want to undersell your capabilities and miss out on an opportunity ... but on the other hand, you also don't want to misrepresent yourself or claim a competency you don't have.The solution? Use skill levels on your resume. Words like Expert, Proficient, and Beginner quantify your skills, highlight your expertise, and give employers a clear understanding of your abilities — making it easier for them to hire you.How to list skill levels on your resumeln that case, how do you list skill levels on your resume? Here's how to get started.Write a list of the skills you possess. You should keep this as a master list somewhere to help you easily customize your resume by swapping out skills.Take a look at the job description. Match that up against your own list until you have 10-15 skills in common.Create a section toward the bottom of your resume titled "Skills" or "Additional Information."Choose how to organize your skills list (more on these options later).Specify your level of proficiency clearly and simply, so that it can be understood at a glance.Reinforce these skill levels by mentioning key skills in your Work Experience bullet points.Now, let's take a closer look at how to categorize skill levels.How to display skill levels on a resumeYou have a few different options for displaying skills levels on your resume. You can:Categorize skills by level of proficiencySpecify your skill level in parentheses after each skillDescribe your skill level in simple termsList your years of experience with each skillInclude formal levels of qualificationKeep scrolling for some examples of what each of these options should look like and how to use them for your own resume.Categorize skills by level of proficiencyThis is one of the clearest ways to indicate skill level on your resume. In your Skills section, create subheadings like "Expert" and "Proficient," then list your relevant skills.Here's a basic template:Expert: Python, Microsoft Excel, Adobe PhotoshopProficient: Java, CSS, UX DesignAnd here's an example of a resume using this approach:Example of grouping skills by proficiency level on a resumeSpecify your skill level in parentheses after each skillYou can also list your proficiency level after each skill if you have a number of varying skill levels. Here's a template you can use:SKILLSMicrosoft Access (Expert)Strategic Planning (Proficient)PRINCE2 (Proficient)Agile Project Management (Novice)And here's an example from a resume:Example of listing skill levels in parentheses on a resumeDescribe your skill level in simple termsIf you prefer to organize your skills in a different way — for example, by breaking them up into categories like "Technical Skills," "Certifications," "Volunteering," and "Awards" — you can add in a couple of simple words to describe your skill level.Here's a template for you to follow:SKILLSTechnical Skills: Advanced in Microsoft Access, SQL and Tableau; Proficient with Python, Java and HadoopLanguages: Fluent in English, Spanish; Conversational Proficiency in French, GermanAnd here's another example of what it could look like:Example of describing skill levels on a resume in simple termsList your years of experience with each skillDo you feel self-conscious about self-describing as an "expert?" You can get around this by listing your years of experience instead. This has the additional benefit of being purely factual, allowing recruiters to see more easily if you match their ideal candidate.Here's a template:SKILLS HTML/CSS (12 years)Java (10 years)PHP (9 years)And here's a resume example:Example of listing years of experience with each skillInclude formal levels of qualificationSimilarly, you can use formal qualifications as a shortcut to describing your skill levels. Qualifications can go in an "Additional Information" section alongside other skills, or in a separate resume section if you prefer.Here's a template you can copy and paste:ADDITIONAL INFORMATIONTechnical Skills: Financial Analysis, Forecasting, QuickBooksCertifications: CFA Level 2 (August 2016)And here's an example in action:Example of including qualifications to illustrate skill levelsDo's and don'ts of putting skill levels on a resumeOnce you've decided how to organize your skills, here are a few tips to keep you on track.DOList the skills you're most proficient in first.Use technical language and name the exact tools you use — for example, "WordPress, CSS and Javascript" instead of "website creation."Use the same scale for all skills and be consistent with your wording.List more skills at an "Expert" or "Proficient" level and limit the number of "Novice" or "Intermediate" skills on your resume.Use the job description to guide you. You can also enlist the aid of tools like our Skills and Keywords finder or Targeted Resume.DON'TDon't use color coding to represent your skill levels. Not all recruiters will understand what different colors are supposed to mean, and most ATS software will strip out formatting — including color.Don't use pie charts, graphs, or infographics to display your skill levels. It may look fancy, but images generally don't belong on your resume.Don't give yourself a rating — for example, "5 stars" or "95/100."Don't list skills you have no experience with. You should have a basic understanding of every skill on your resume and expect to be questioned about it in an interview.What skill levels to use on your resumeThere is no standardized way to quantify skills, but don't fret. No matter the industry, these universal terms can be applied to most common skills.General skill levelsHere is an example of general skill levels and what these terms mean to recruiters.Beginner, Novice or Entry-level: You have some working experience with this skill and have taken a course or other training. You are familiar enough to perform basic tasks, but require guidance or oversight if using this skill independently.Intermediate: You are comfortable using this skill as part of a team with minimal assistance. You have some hands-on experience and could discuss this skill in an interview.Proficient or Working Experience: You have used this skill independently at work, are comfortable with all aspects of this skill and require no supervision or assistance.Expert or Advanced: You have extensive hands-on experience performing this skill independently to a high level. You could teach this skill to others and run a team where this skill was a primary focus.If you're not sure if you have represented your skill levels the right way, upload your resume to the tool below — you'll get a confidential resume review and suggestions for improvements.Language-specific skill levelsHere are some options for including language skills on your resume.Basic or Elementary: You know a few simple phrases but would struggle to hold a conversation.Intermediate or Conversational: You can hold a conversation in this language but struggle with complex terms or topics. You can make yourself understood but need assistance to read or write.Fluent or Proficient: You can hold an in-depth conversation and communicate ideas effectively. You can read and write in this language easily.Native or Bilingual: You are fluent and consider this a first language. You could conduct an interview or hold a meeting in this language.Programming and coding skill levelsHere is an example of how the general skill levels above would relate to industry-specific computer programming skills.Basic: You just started learning this language, can read code, and have limited experience with it at work.Competent: You have a basic understanding of a specific database and can perform simple tasks, but would require assistance to create projects independently.Skilled or Proficient: You have a thorough understanding of this particular programming language, can perform complex tasks, and create effective applications independently.Expert: You can create complex applications and have used this language on multiple projects. You could oversee a team of beginners and teach the basics.Determining your skill proficiencyWhen determining your proficiency level, consider how confident you would be using a skill independently.Do you have prior experience with this skill?Do you need oversight or guidance to use this skill?If asked about this skill in an interview, could you talk about it confidently and offer examples?Be honest about your skill levels and never oversell your abilities or claim competencies you don't have. There is no shame in being a beginner, but an employer needs to know truthfully so they can provide any assistance or training you might require.Hard vs soft skillsHard skills are technical abilities associated with specific job tasks, for example, Javascript, WordPress, or SEO. Soft skills are personal qualities you bring to a team, such as conflict resolution, time management, and organization.Hard skills can be quantified through skill levels and qualifications. Soft skills are subjective and speak more to how you perform in a work environment.Avoid putting soft skills on your resume and focus on specific hard skills. Soft skills are better exemplified through work experience and descriptions of specific accomplishments. Anyone can write that they are hardworking with good attention to detail. Instead, demonstrate these facts to your recruiter through a detailed work history.ATS: Why are skills important?Automated software known as Applicant Tracking Systems are used to scan resumes for specific keywords. ATS is popular with recruiters as it streamlines their work by eliminating unqualified applicants.Not including relevant skills on your resume can be the difference between making it past the ATS and getting filtered out at the first hurdle. Knowing what keywords recruiters are looking for is key.Make sure to include all relevant skills and use our Targeted Resume tool to scan your resume and identify any important keywords or skills you might be missing.You can also use the skills search tool below to get a list of skills and keywords relevant to the job you're applying for. What to do if a skill is missing from your resumeNever lie and claim a skill you don't have. Instead, invest some time into training courses, like Google Career Certificates or Coursera online courses, so you can confidently add a new skill to your resume. Want to get your resume to the top of the applicant pile? Including proficiency levels to highlight your skills can show a hiring manager why you're the best person for the job.Navigating the job application process can be daunting. How can you make your resume stand out from the competition? Including your skill levels on your resume can make you a more attractive candidate and can encourage a hiring manager to more closely examine the distinctive background, abilities, and qualities that make you an exceptional employee.In this article, we'll discuss skill levels, how to include them on your resume, and give examples of how to properly format instead. This has the additional benefit of being purely factual, allowing recruiters to see more easily if you match their ideal candidate.Here's a template:SKILLS HTML/CSS (12 years)Java (10 years)PHP (9 years)And here's a resume example:Example of listing years of experience with each skillInclude formal levels of qualificationSimilarly, you can use formal qualifications as a shortcut to describing your skill levels. 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Knowing what keywords recruiters are looking for is key.Make sure to include all relevant skills and use our Targeted Resume tool to scan your resume and identify any important keywords or skills you might be missing.You can also use the skills search tool below to get a list of skills and keywords relevant to the job posting.) Be careful of assigning a number value to your skill level though — you might think an eight represents expertise, but the hiring manager may think nines or tens are what they're looking for.What are the 4 different types of skill levels? You might choose to define your skill level by using experience-based categories, which helps hiring managers easily discern the areas in which you possess some proficiency. A simple, straightforward method of defining your skill levels is using four terms most people understand, such as:Beginner: You can execute simple tasks and have a general understanding of the skill. (You might want to leave this off your resume, however. Chances are a hiring manager isn't looking for beginner-level skills.)Intermediate: This is the lowest skill level you should define on your resume. If you have an intermediate-level skill, you do not have a comprehensive knowledge of that skill, but can carry out some mid-level commands.Proficient: You easily navigate the necessary tasks and can deal with most issues that would arise on a day-to-day basis. Expert: You know this skill backward and forward and can troubleshoot any problems that might arise without assistance.Expert TipAccording to Bernard Marr, author of "Future Skills: The 20 Skills and Competencies Everyone Needs to Succeed in a Digital World," there are twenty skills that are essential for everyone in today's workplace. They include digital/data literacy, critical thinking, interpersonal communication, and digital threat awareness. Being an "expert" in these skills will help you stay at the top of your field.Other methods of categorizationYou can also include an eye-catching system for defining your skill levels. Utilizing colors can be creative and set you apart — just be sure to include a key so that anyone reading your resume knows what the colors mean!For example, green could indicate expert, yellow could indicate proficient, and red could represent intermediate.Example:Green: QuickBooks ~ CRM ~ ExcelYellow: SalesForce ~ Customer Service ~ SalesRed: Financial Reporting ~ PowerPoint ~ WordYou might also consider separating your hard and soft skill levels and categorizing them accordingly. Hard skills can be specific to the job you're applying for, and soft skills are the more hard-to-define qualities that reflect the personal qualities that can help you succeed on the job.Tips for listing your skill levels on your resumeHow you incorporate your skill levels in the skills section of your resume is up to you, but here are a few tips to make the process easier:Use a template. If organizing isn't your forte, a template can help you keep your information neat and easy to read.List your strongest skills first. Hiring managers are more apt to keep reading your resume if they see applicable skills at the top of your list.Make sure you have more high-level skills than lower ones. While you want a balance, you want your skill levels to be more expert than novice.Tailor your skills to the job you're applying for. Include the required skills at the top of your skill list.Examples of skills list and proficiency levelsSo, how might these skills look on a resume? Utilizing the word-based labeling system, it might come together like this:Technical Skills:Database and SQL (expert) Cloud Computing (proficient) Sublime Text (intermediate)Foreign languages:English (native) Spanish (expert/fluent) Portuguese (proficient)Interpersonal Skills:Conflict resolution (expert) Problem-solving (expert) Time management (intermediate) Active learning (proficient)DoDon'tBe honest with your skill level. There might be a test!Include skills that aren't relevant to the job description.Make sure to choose one method of defining your skill levels, and use it consistently throughout your resume.Forget to provide evidence of your skills in other sections.Keep your list easy to read.List too many novice-level skills.Other things to considerYou may not think you need to list your soft skills but think again. Soft (or interpersonal) skills can be as useful on the job as your technical expertise. Hard skills are easier to define — coding software, languages, or mechanical skills. But most employers want to know how you'll put your "soft skills" to use in the workplace, and how comfortable you are with things such as public speaking, writing, or negotiating. Listing these skills with a proficiency label will help a potential employer identify the strongest candidates for the position. So make sure you include both hard and soft skills, and align them with the job posting. To meet your career goals, your resume needs to provide a clear representation of you, your experience, and your skills. To properly communicate your expertise in your field and your overall employability to hiring managers, quantify your skills with levels of expertise and show the hiring manager why you're a top contender for the job.Key takeawaysSkill levels can be utilized on your resume to demonstrate how much knowledge and expertise you have in a particular skill set.Define your skill level with specific words, colors, or graphs that can be quantified.Include both hard and soft skill levels on your resume. A targeted skills section is a major component of an excellent resume. Adding your skill level to your resume makes that section even more effective. The blog below will help you develop a resume skills section that represents your abilities at their best.A skills section is a given on any resume, but to boost the power of that section, you may choose to add your proficiency level to give employers a more honest representation of your abilities. But judging your own skills can be tough. You may be tempted to underplay or overplay your expertise level in an effort to impress. So how do you go about creating an accurate resume that includes skill levels? In this blog, we'll break down the answer to that question into the following topics: Categories of skills to list What are resume proficiency levels? How to rate your skill levels for a resume Ways to list skill levels on a resume Expert tip Before you begin to rate your skill levels, you need to create a list of all your attributes. Brainstorm any and all knowledge and abilities that you have, regardless of whether they seem relatable to the job. Keep this master list and add to it as you progress in your career. It will come in handy when you compile your skills list, but also when you get asked that common interview question: "What are your greatest skills?" The 2 categories of skillsOnce you've created your long list of skills, you need to organize it. There are two main types of skills: Hard skillsHard skills are those you learned for the job. In other words, if you can take a class to learn it and it applies directly to your profession, it's a hard skill. Examples include computer software, rules and regulations, accounting procedures, graphic design, and languages.Soft skillsSoft skills are interpersonal and general work qualities that are relatable to most jobs. Examples include communication, trustworthiness, reliability, problem solving, and organization.Your resume should include a blend of both of these types of skills.You may want to further divide your master list into categories of both hard and soft skills that will ensure you can easily create the best mix for your resume skill section. Below are example categories. Hard skills Soft skills Technical or computer Communication Industry knowledge Presentation Management Sales Analytical Creativity What are the 4 resume proficiency levels?Once you have impressed yourself with all the skills you have acquired in your life (not just your career because some of your most valuable soft skills are those you have developed in your relationships with others and in school), it's time to think about how to rate your skill level.Here are the four levels of skills you should use to rank yourself: Expert. You know this skill hands down, can guide others in using it, and feel 100% confident that any related issue that comes up, you can handle. Proficient. You use this skill regularly in your profession and are confident in your ability to tackle most situations. You can troubleshoot when something goes wrong, although you may have to turn to an expert on rare occasions. Intermediate. You've moved beyond the basics, but are still learning. As long as the task isn't complex, you can complete it and do some basic troubleshooting. Beginner. You've just started learning a new skill and can perform some basics, but you can't say that you could use this skill without assistance or more training. Now that you have the definitions of skill levels, let's look at how you can rank yourself within themHow to rate your skill levels for a resumeMany resume templates offer the option of ranking your skills to give recruiters a clearer picture of who you are as a candidate. This extra information requires more thought on your part, but will also help you find the right job fit.Resume skills section explanationUnless you really want to list a skill you believe is secondary to the position you seek, but adds to your candidacy, avoid choosing beginner-level skills.Hard skills Hard skills are easier to rate. You may even have taken an assessment test that tells you exactly where you fall on the proficiency scale of skill levels. Any skill that you have advanced certification in makes you proficient or expert—you've proved it by passing a class and earning a certificate.If you're wavering between two levels, you can see if there's a quick assessment you can complete online or ask a colleague. You don't want to take yourself out of the running by being too modest, but you also don't want to exaggerate and find that you are in over your head at your new job.Soft skills Soft skills can be more difficult to rate because there's no simple test for how well you communicate or organize your workday. One method is to break down the skill into its components and see how many of the components you have. For example: Are you an active listener? Can you give feedback? Regularly communicate and share information with peers and other stakeholders? All of these are parts of communication skills. How to list skill levels on a resumeskills editor in resume.io builder Decide on your format. If you have more than seven skills you wish to highlight, consider a resume template that allows for more space for this section. A hybrid resume format typically enlarges your skills section. While this may take some space from your other sections, in particular your employment history, if the job requires many technical abilities, this may be the way to go. Use a design element. The best way to list your skill levels on your resume is to use a visualized rating system, such as stars, a bar, or another graphic element. This visual addition helps to highlight your abilities and gives recruiters a quick way to see that your talents match the position. To give more weight to your skills, choose a template that uses not only a rating scale but also a background color or another spot design that attracts attention. List skills in order. Start with the skills in which you are an expert, and then list those in which you are proficient. Intermediate skills should fall at the bottom, but lean toward only listing these if they are mentioned as "nice to have" skills on the job listing. Personalize for each job. Your skills list is dependent upon the job you're applying for. This is even more true when you rate your skills because each job prioritizes skills a bit differently. Make sure you match your skills to those desired by your targeted employer and remember that being overqualified can also eliminate you from the running. Expert tip While your skills section is an important element of your resume, you need to back up this listing with concrete examples within the rest of your document. Use your profile, employment history, and education sections to provide evidence that backs up your ratings and broadens the picture of what you can do with your skills that will make your prospective employer's workday easier. Key takeawaysThe skills section offers valuable information at a glance to HR personnel. Taking the time to rank and rate your skill levels will also help you target jobs for which you are an excellent candidate. Before you can rate your proficiency levels for your resume, you need to know what all your skills are. An outstanding skills section includes proficiency levels in both hard and soft skills. A design element will help guide a recruiter's eyes to your top-notch skills and proficiency levels. Use your entire resume to show off how you use your skills to do a great job.